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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**RUSSIANS INDICTED IN IMMIGRATION AND CREDIT CARD FRAUD SCHEME**

**Greenbelt, Maryland** - Thomas M. DiBiagio, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced today that Igor Kravtsov, age 37, Andrei Kolomitsyev, age 36, Dimitry Petrov, age 34, Max Bekov, age 38, and Jouri Matsiouk, age 32, all of New York City, were indicted in a sophisticated scheme on charges of conspiring to use INS documents and obtain false social security cards for individuals who may have entered the United States illegally.

The eight-count indictment unsealed today after the arrests of the defendants in New York charges that Kravtsov, Bekov, and Matsiouk opened post office boxes in the Maryland metropolitan area and elsewhere in order to facilitate alien applications for social security cards. One or more of the defendants brought aliens to a Social Security Administration office, including one in Owings Mills, Maryland, to apply for social security cards. The application for the cards typically required the alien to attach written evidence provided by the INS of his/her legal status in the United States. The indictment alleges that the defendants falsified or submitted counterfeit INS documents, permitting the alien to receive a social security card which was mailed to commercial mailboxes opened by Kravtsov, Bekov, and Matsiouk. Obtaining a social security card permitted the aliens, among other things, to establish credit and obtain driver's licenses in the United States which they

would not ordinarily be able to do. At least two of the defendants, Fetrov and Kravtsov, used credit cards they obtained illegally.

The five defendants who were arrested appeared yesterday in federal court in Brooklyn, New York and were detained pending their appearance in the District of Maryland to face charges. The indictment was originally returned February 10, 2003 and superseded on April 2, 2003.

If convicted, the defendants face 5 years imprisonment on the conspiracy charge and 10 years on the document fraud and credit card fraud charges, along with a fine of \$250,000 for each charge.

The case is the result of an investigation by the Office of the Inspector General of the Social Security Administration and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) of the Department of Homeland Security. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney David I. Salem.